

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**  
September 6, 2005

The Honorable Wally Herger, Chairman  
Human Resources Subcommittee  
Committee on Ways and Means  
2268 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Herger:

The tragic loss of life, human suffering, property loss and still unfolding aftermath from Hurricane Katrina demand the attention and constructive action by the Congress. We should be prepared to make rapid legislative changes to ensure a compassionate and comprehensive response to those in need.

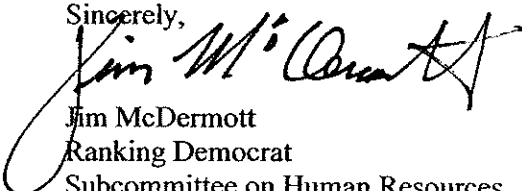
I write to urge you to call a hearing for this Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, or as soon as practical, as a first step to scoping the issues and needs to be addressed in the aftermath of Katrina. The Subcommittee on Human Resources has jurisdiction over many programs that are or will be a lifeline to those affected by Katrina, including: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child support, foster care, unemployment compensation, and eligibility of welfare recipients for food stamps.

As a medical doctor and child psychiatrist, I am particularly concerned over the health and safety of vulnerable children. Specifically, the Subcommittee needs to know where the thousands of displaced foster children are located, and who is taking care of them. We need to know whether these children are safe, and if the foster parents are receiving the federal help they deserve. It is vitally important that TANF continues to work for those displaced by Katrina, and clearly we should ensure that those who have lost their jobs due to the hurricane are adequately served by the Unemployment Insurance program.

I recommend that the Subcommittee hold field hearings within two weeks in as many of the affected areas as practical in order to get a first hand look at the situation and take testimony from Americans who have seen their lives torn to pieces. There are countless issues that our subcommittee needs to explore and to address. The devastation that has struck America's south will only be exacerbated if we fail to ensure that the safety net maintained by our committee will withstand the devastation unleashed by Katrina.

No one doubts that the federal government let people down last week. Together, let's take a step in rebuilding trust with the American people. In your role as Chairman of the Human Resources Subcommittee, I urge you to act quickly so that we can begin to tackle the difficult work ahead.

Sincerely,

  
Jim McDermott  
Ranking Democrat  
Subcommittee on Human Resources